

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A sync mark detector identifies a sync mark in an incoming bitstream of a communications channel. A bit comparing circuit compares the sync mark bit-by-bit to the incoming bitstream if channel irregularities do not exist. A symbol comparing circuit compares the sync mark symbol-by-symbol to the incoming bitstream if channel irregularities do exist. The bit comparing circuit implements a bit level matching rule. The symbol comparing circuit implements a symbol level matching rule. The bit comparing circuit generates a sync mark found state when the bit level matching rule is satisfied. The symbol comparing circuit generates a sync mark found state when the symbol level matching rule is satisfied. Post coding such as NRZ, INRZI, or NRZI can be used.